Promises of *Ubuntu* in the New South Africa

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Dedicated to Winston Kloppers

Abstract (from text)

This paper wishes to address social and spiritual development as it relates to the youth and to issues of (non)violence in the New South Africa. Young people have been blamed for much of the street violence in urban centers and narrow crime fighting measures have been pursued by state actors. This paper proposes an alternative script to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as it explores the idea of *ubuntu* in the Native American "circle of courage" and concludes with some exemplary African community solutions to privatization of public goods, such as free access to water and electricity.

Introduction

Nelson Mandela, former President of South Africa, took several steps to avert a civil war after the end of apartheid, one of them constituted the amnesty and reparations processes of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which according to Archbishop Tutu extolled the virtues of *ubuntu*—a Zulu term that is difficult to translate and encompasses the spirit of humanity—seeing the human kernel in one another. Another less known policy was the institutionalization of the "circle of courage" after Mandela consulted with Native American peacemakers, who have employed community justice models in "sentence circles." Nelson Mandela's Commission on Young People at Risk had a unique opportunity to reconstruct child and youth care programs. Rejecting the bitter legacy of apartheid, the Commission embraced a strength perspective. It remains to be seen when this model has made its way into youth prisons or other punitive structures in South Africa.

This paper wishes to address social and spiritual development as it relates to the youth and to issues of (non)violence in the New South Africa. Young people have been blamed for much of the street violence in urban centers and narrow crime fighting measures have been pursued by state actors. This paper proposes an alternative script to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as it explores the idea of *ubuntu* in the Native American "circle of courage" and concludes with some exemplary African community solutions to privatization of public goods, such as free access to water and electricity.

Language and Identity

How shall we talk about the young people of South Africa? I wish to take issue with labels, such as the lost generation and juvenile delinquents. Should we replace with them with the "youth at risk" label?

During the later period of the apartheid injustice system, notably the turbulent 1980s, the youth learnt from their erstwhile peaceful confrontation with the police during the 1976 Soweto uprising, that a more disruptive engagement with the regime was needed to topple it—many adopted the movement slogan "Liberation before Education" by cutting classes and boycotting schools; going underground and joining military formations; joining gangs for self-protection and contributing to other forms of agitation and political education. Some of it has been labeled "black on black" violence, which diverts attention from the regime's infiltration of movements and divide and conquer techniques (e.g., Inkatha Freedom Party vs. African National Congress cadres). Mandela affectionately referred to this group of youngsters as the Young Lions, who helped bring down apartheid. Yet, many think of this militant youth as the "lost generation" as they forfeited schooling for credentials and jobs

and in the 1990s were too traumatized or otherwise disaffected to catch up with educational demands. And as youth leaders have stated, the youth's major contribution to the struggle has been minimized.[1] After all, youth unemployment is disproportionately high and in a country where over half the population is under 25 years old, an epidemic of unemployment can only lead to social unrest.

However, it seems easier to label the crisis of unemployment and underemployment as juvenile delinquency in order to individualize the problem and eschew the responsibility that white South Africans ought to face: one might ask (with Tutu) what is their part in the national reconciliation project? Far from saying "I am sorry" for committing atrocities or omitting even feeble signs of resistance during apartheid, they continue to reap the socio-economic benefits of the racist past, aided and abetted by an ANC led government which voluntarily imposed its own structural adjustment program, according to critic Ashwin Desai led to the following bleak scenario:

> [t]axes on the rich were cut, exchange controls dropped, and tariffs protecting
> unionized South African workers from imports from sweat shops were abandoned.
> Around a hundred thousand jobs were lost each year and a million alone in 2001.
> Water, electricity, housing and health care were taken from those who couldn't pay.[2]

Yet fear among the elite is paramount as gated communities and private armed rapid response teams assure the upper class a quality of life not seen by those who are portrayed as delinquents or youthful offenders.

And violence has become endemic: first, there is the violence of poverty; unemployment in the Cape Flats townships is 46% overall, while 60 % for youth between 16 and 30. Crime prevention has faced a new form of violence: a law enforcement-driven

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approach which criminalizes street children in order to present "safe spaces" to rich residents, business and tourists.[3] Unemployment for girls is actually higher than for boys and also girls are reported to have higher educational goals than afforded to them.[4] Then there's gender-specific violence against girls: virginity testing, sexual abuse, rape in part because of the myth that virgins cure AIDS, prostitution due to family poverty, murder of known lesbians. But how do we categorize somebody as fitting the category of "juvenile delinquent"? After all, there is a fine line to be drawn between illicit "criminal" activities and political activities disdained by the powers that be, which amount to a criminality of survival.[5] Consider the following case of a young man who wasn't present at community meetings of an illegal electricity reconnection project in Johannesburg. When confronted about his absence he says matter of factly: "Oh, I'm sorry, my sister needed to go to school so I decided to try crime for a while."[6] Reconnecting electricity lines restores a basic amenity in the home, but it still won't pay for school fees…

I find the label youth-at-risk troubling, even though defenders of the term, such as noted child educators Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern, argue that the *descriptive* term "youth at risk" avoids blaming the child (which is blatant in the term "juvenile delinquent") and instead points to environmental hazards that need to be dealt with.[7] While I agree with their environmental hypothesis, I take issue with the term itself as it also contains a *prescriptive* layer, ascribing risky behavior to "troubled" youth. Instead, I hold we affirm a principle of *ubuntu* in young people—i.e. a youth with resilience. *Tsotsi* by director Gavin Hood (2005), winner of the Academy Awards for best foreign film, seems to display the spirit of resilience, of finding hope and humanity among gang members in the Soweto townships. Perhaps Archbishop Desmond Tutu says it best in the following:

We must look on children in need not as problems but as individuals with potential to share if they are given the opportunity. Even when they are really troublesome, there is some good in them, for, after all, they were created by God. I would hope we could find creative ways to draw out of our children the good that is there in each of them. [8]

Does the Center hold?

Dostoyevsky has said the sign of civilization is seen when one enters a nation's prisons. The Cape region was the first area of the continent to face experimentation with extensive European carceral structures and now, 200 years later, as a highly bureaucratic and industrialized state the new South Africa has "managed to maintain the penitentiary systems at the heart of [its] judicial system."[9] Even the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (hereafter, TRC) did not motivate returning exiles and former political prisoners to rethink the sordid prison history of the country to scrap this colonial legacy and rethink punishment in the New South Africa. However, under the leadership of President Mandela two notorious prisons were shut down, functioning now as museums: Robben Island and a women's prison in Johannesburg which will also serve as a women's cultural center.

Fig. 1, Old Women's Prison, Johannesburg
http://www.joburg.org.za/aug_2002/jail.stm

Yet, more worrisome, South Africa has established itself today as the continent's number one jailer. 187000 people are imprisoned, among whom 52000 awaiting trials (some 14000 being too poor to afford bail) amounting to over 400 prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants.[10]
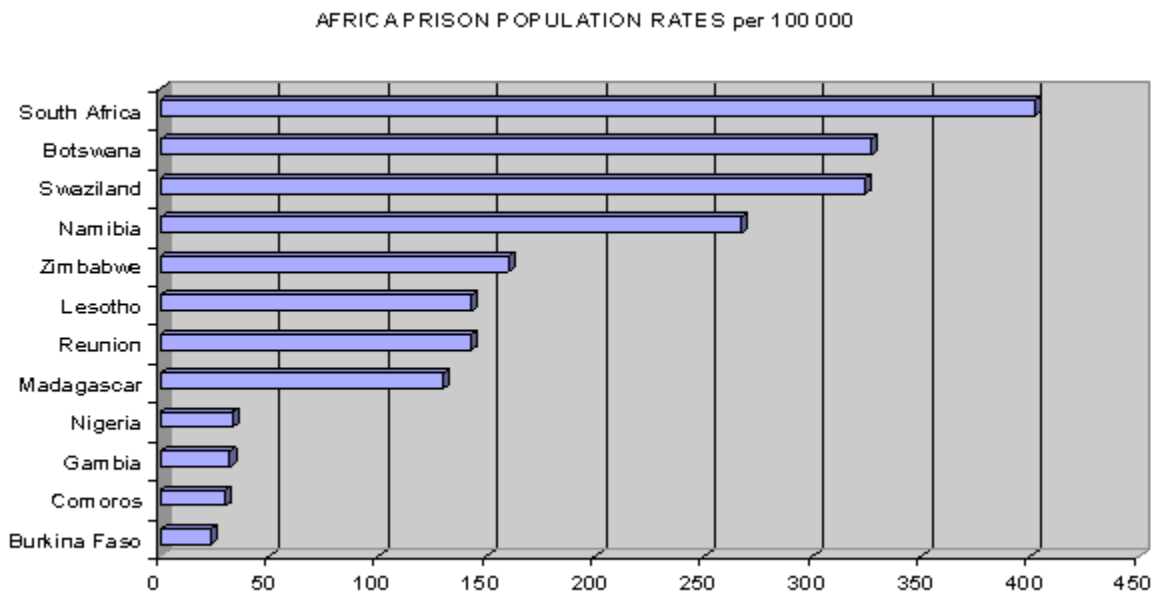

AFRICA PRISON POPULATION RATES per 100 000

Table 1, Africa prison population rates, 2005
http://judicialinsp.pwv.gov.za/Annualreports/annualreport2005.asp

Importantly, South Africa's absolute numbers of prisoners dwarfs Rwanda where over 100,000 people are jailed for suspicion of being *génocidaires*.[11] Arguably, such high prison rates correlate with high crime rates, as South Africa's violent crime stats are one of the worst in the world, with 20,000 people murdered in 2004-5 in a population of 45 million, although corrections experts note that there is no direct correlation between crime and punishment.[12] Over 28 percent of people in prison are remand prisoners, awaiting trial, many of them unable to make paltry sums of bail.

Unsentenced Cases Longer than 3 months in Custody : 2005/01

PROVINCES	DURATION IN MONTHS							
	>3 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 12	>12 - 15	>15 - 18	>18 - 24	> 24	Total
Eastern Cape	1029	475	274	163	99	115	77	22:
Free State	554	227	177	119	58	39	64	1238
Gauteng	3481	1786	1212	828	513	616	647	9083
Kwazulu/Natal	1746	1159	401	322	193	220	220	4261
Limpopo	259	63	43	29	30	36	37	497
Mpumalanga	553	211	150	75	52	50	21	1112
North West	356	179	117	90	55	56	50	903
Northern Cape	179	48	23	14	5	3	8	280
Western Cape	1281	581	364	280	226	296	300	3328
Totals	9 438	4 729	2 761	1 920	1 231	1 431	1 424	22 934

table 2, Remand Prisoners
http://judicialinsp.pwv.gov.za/Annualreports/annualreport2005.asp

Thousands of children, about 16-17 years old, remain incarcerated despite efforts to pursue diversionary programs. Add to that the effects of punitive legislation of issuing minimum sentences for a host of offences, so that thousands of people are receiving 25 years to life sentences, and the trend to follow the U.S. mass incarceration is rising. Overcrowding and terrible unsanitary conditions prevail in many prisons as the following photo reveals so clearly.

Fig. 2: Overcrowding conditions
http://judicialinsp.pwv.gov.za/Annualreports/annualreport2005.asp

After the first democratic elections over a decade ago, then minister of justice, Dr. Sipo

Mzimela, favored turning the correctional system over to private corporations and under his

watch two private prisons were built now housing over 6000 prisoners, one of them

operating as a youth prison. The specter of privately run prison harks back to the first

private prisons in South Africa operated by the De Beers Mining Company.

> De Beers built the prisons and the state provided the prisoners to fill them. The
>
> mining company paid to incarcerate their labourers and also paid the state for the
>
> use of their prison labour. By the end of the 19th century, the De Beers Diamond
>
> Mining Company was using over 10,000 prison labourers daily.[13]

Some have lauded the new youth prisons as being run efficiently and offering rehabilitative

programs not available in the state's prison system, although some recent studies have

shown that the youth prison at Louis Trichardt only offers sports programmes. Worrisome trends indeed that are only mitigated by the government's nod to rehabilitation and curbing overcrowding in various white papers. However, politicians have been hard pressed bringing about changes and the judicial system has been slow to change, e.g. with respect to adjusting bail to amounts that poor people can afford and with disparate sentencing for white and Black offenders, where the former typically receive a lighter sentence than the latter. Violence within prisons has not been curbed at all, and a story related to me in 2001 speaks volumes about the vulnerability of young prisoners: A teenage convict wrote to a priest to plead for his safety and release from prison where he is gang-raped every night. The young man knows he has AIDS and he is too afraid to tell his assailants and he also fears that they have been infected.[14]

The causes for criminalization are steeped in "the crime of poverty." A decade after the end of apartheid, the landless question has not been tackled in a meaningful way, joblessness among Blacks is sky high, and South Africa has the ominous distinction of being the country with the highest rates of rapes against women—52,000 reported rapes each year. What are some meaningful community responses to endemic violence?

Ubuntu—from below

To what extent have circles of courage or circles of peace been effective in their respective communities among Native American, First Peoples (of Canada), and South Africans? Have they been successful in stemming recidivism, violent criminality and in contributing to a sense of empowerment among the various actors and stakeholders? Can the "circles of courage" supplant the traditional African intervention models, such as the Lekgotla courts of

Gauteng, South Africa? Indigenous peoples of North America (e.g. Dineh and Lakota) and South Africa (e.g. Tswana and Zulu) have been impacted and influenced by colonization, exploitation and marginalization; both of their communities suffer from high incarceration, recidivism, unemployment, diseases (alcoholism, AIDS) and gender specific violence, especially domestic violence. Does a peace circle foster rehabilitation and reconciliation or does it have a marginal effect on the well being of community members? Are there geographic factors which play a role in peacemaking strategies, e.g. does the anonymity of cities (in South Africa) hinder the effectiveness of the circles of courage or other forms of rehabilitative measures? It will be argued, by drawing on research of peacemaking strategies from other African countries, such as Mali,[15] that socially connected people tend to be more willing and capable of avoiding a criminal path, in particular offenses against persons, than socially displaced people.

From the point of view of addressing a child's needs by reclaiming her social environment, Brendtro et al. utilize the insights of Native American child rearing and those of other indigenous communities. In Lakota culture, children are seen as "sacred beings;" the Maori term for children is "gift of the gods."[16]

In many societies, youth is a term that is remarkable malleable. In many cultures a young childbearing mother (say of 17 years old) will not be expected to raise her child; rather, she has the assistance of an extensive network of family: hence the African saying "it takes a village to raise a child." In Mali among the Bamana, once one reaches the age of 40 (in the west, often a crisis point of aging), one is finally considered a "junior elder," that is, a person whose advice might be solicited. It is equivalent to the West's notion of entrance into adulthood (i.e. being 18 or 21 years of age). Many (inter)generational

problems could be resolved, if child rearing were left to the elders (beginning ages 50-60) and child bearing left to the young.[17]

If maturity is a deferred event in non-Western societies, how might they treat their children? There are different expectations: In colonial times, we learn from the Jesuits' diaries and letters that they viewed Native American child raising practices with horror and wrote about the absence of disciplining (spanking, raising one's voice) and proper toilet training. Among the Maasai of East Africa, if parents quarrel in front of their child and she wishes to stop them by putting a blade of grass between them as a sign of peace, they are supposed to stop fighting at once. If they continue, both parents will face serious admonishment by the council of elders and will have to pay a heavy dose of goods (usually cattle) to restore the peace of the community. The child is empowered to be a peacemaker. (The council of elders is made of men and women who have never fought with anyone.) Across Africa, children are often deferentially called "papi" or "mami" by adult relatives, because they imbue the spirit of the ancestors who have recently passed on. It would not make sense to discipline one's father or mother. In South Africa offenders are considered youth who are under the age of 35 years, which overlaps with other African classification systems. The inspectorate's report on the condition of prisons notes the dangers of transferring youthful offenders to adult prisons, exposing them to rape, gangs and the hardened criminal way of life (of recidivism).

What are the key principles in traditional societies for educating the young child and ensuring social integration? We may look at the Circle of Courage for inspiration:

The Circle of Courage

The spirit of belonging: "I am loved" (attachment).

The spirit of mastery: "I can succeed" (achievement).

The spirit of independence: "I have the power to make decisions" (autonomy).

The spirit of generosity: "I have a purpose for my life" (altruism).[18]
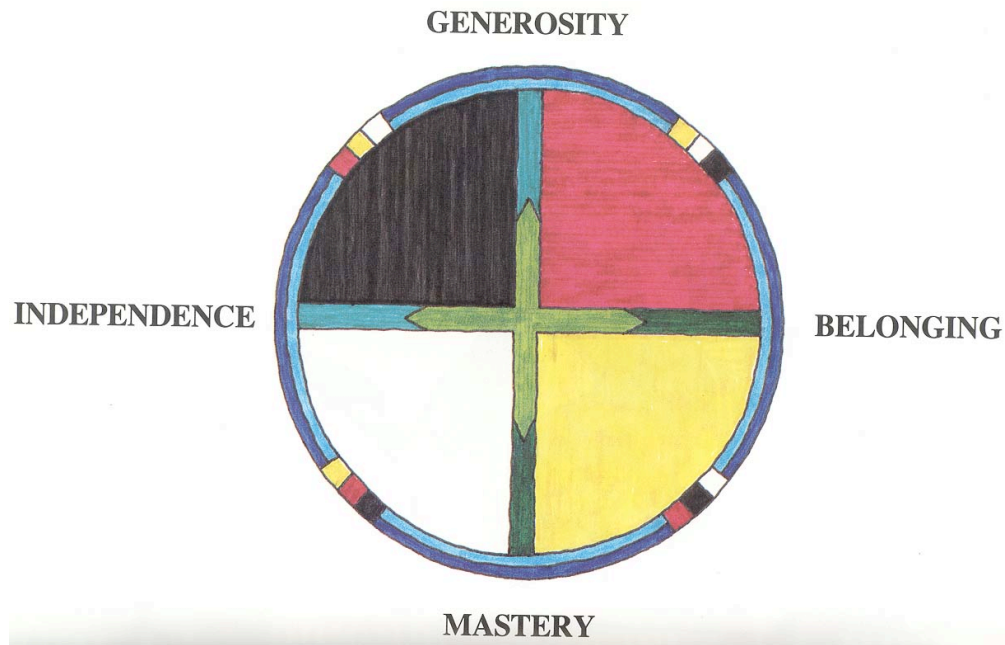

Fig. 3: Circle of Courage
http://www.behavioradvisor.com/CircleOfCourage.html

Example for belonging: Among Native America, belonging means to honor that we are all interconnected with each other and the earth. Children learn from each other (peer-groups, age mates) and from adults about the value of interdependence and community. Blood relations are not valued above other types of relations: "you belonged if you acted like you belonged."[19] Being exiled then, as form of discipline/punishment, is considered social death—or "hell" in Christian vernacular.

Example of mastery: Achieving competence has to be seen in a holistic light, not just with respect to work-related talents, but also with respect to character-formation. Children learn

mastery through games, and adults reinforce the notion that striving is prized over rivalry or display of arrogance (by the winner or winning team).[20]

Example for independence: Personal autonomy and responsibility is prized among Blackfoot Indians. A toddler tried to pry open a door to a cabin. He struggled and pushed and shoved. No avail. But nobody intervened in his struggle. Finally after half an hour, he was able to open it up and was praised for it.[21] To Western observers an adult's non-intervention might be seen as callous and uncaring, but if one looks again, one sees that the Blackfoot elder has utmost respect for the child and teaching him autonomy, perseverance and independence.

Example of generosity: French philosopher Bataille has studied with curiosity the potlatch rituals of the North West Native Americans. Gift-giving is taken to another level by people in so far each potlatch is a ritual of exaggerated (so it seems to Western eyes) showering of expensive gifts to a visitor, including a house. However, all Native cultures emphasize to their children the importance to let go of dear possessions and offer it to somebody who may be in need. Children are thus instilled with the power of giving and caring for others. In college, this has taken the form of service-learning, where students are required to perform 30-100 hours a semester of good work in the community. In contributing to others' needs, children are steered away from self-centered, self-destructive, or anti-social attitudes and towards the peacemaking ideal that they matter because they make a difference in some others' lives.[22]

Completing the circle, from generosity to the sense of belonging, is accomplished through the feeling that we are all connected, and if I give a priceless gift to another, I am aware that I am really giving to myself. The circle of courage, which embodies a powerful

peacemaker's philosophy, overlaps with the socio-centric tenets of *ubuntu*, which foregrounds respect for elders, compassion with less fortunate people and discovery of inner gifts.

What if the circle of courage is disrupted? Two examples illustrate a hope for repair and healing the community. The circle commands us to engage into a leap of faith or as Tutu puts it when he speaks of *ubuntu*, to continue to see the humanity in each other, and that the lives of offender and victims are intertwined: "My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours."[23]

Lakota: A murder was committed. An elder meets with the aggrieved family and hears their rage. After a while, the elder affirms their feelings and suggests that the young offender must be punished. All of the sudden, he intones that another way is possible, a road towards peace and reconciliation. To heal the community he suggests that the family adopt the young man, who has to take the place of the slain one. Next, the offender is called in and he is offered the sacred peace pipe. When he is told what his fate will be, he starts to cry and ask for forgiveness. Once he is taken in by his new family, he is said to make a better relative than a blood relative.[24]

South Africa—US: Amy Biehl, a white Fulbright student traveled with her Black friends to a Black township, Gugulethu in 1990. She was in South Africa to observe the transition from apartheid to democracy. Once arriving at the township, their car was surrounded, she was taunted by angry youth and she was murdered. Several years later, the four offenders petitioned the Amnesty Commission for having committed a political crime. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), under the leadership of Bishop Tutu, blended Western, Christian principles with the African principle of *ubuntu* (belonging) and listened to

testimonies of victims as well as confessions of offenders, who committed political crimes under apartheid. The youth who slayed Biehl wished to apologize in person to Biehl's parents, who were under great pressure not to see the men. The parents agreed nonetheless and it turned out to be one of the highlights of TRCs message of Ubuntu. In the aftermath of the proceedings, the parents travelled with two of the men around the world to talk about the virtues of forgiveness and reconciliation. These men had asked the Biehls to take them as sons in the place of their beloved daughter. The Biehls have adopted them and bought plots of land for them so that they could build a house and be self-sustaining.[25]   In addition, the Amy Biehl Foundation funded community projects, such as a bakery where young people could learn the trade and be gainfully employed.

Both cases illustrate the need to reaffirm belonging, through the radical step of adopting the offender in the victims' family. They illustrate to me that another world is possible, a world beyond prisons and even beyond punishment.

An equally grand gesture of forgiveness was made by the families whose sons were killed by Eugene de Kock, a white South African policeman who applied for amnesty for many atrocities he committed during apartheid. The victims' mothers were able to look him into his eyes and 'see' his remorseful stance, which prompted them to reach out to him in the spirit of *ubuntu*.

Furthermore, in the youth hearings of the TRC, several young men and women speak about the violations they endured, including the trauma of breaking down and "ratting out" a comrade to the police force—and worst of all, to this day being considered an "askari" (a police informant) by the community. The requests for compensation by the children were rather modest: "that someone should listen…; that someone should take

them seriously; that memorials should be created for those who gave their lives, or that schools should bear their names; that education which had been disrupted should be able to continue; sometimes also that bullets still remaining in their bodies should be removed, and that money should be made available for this."[26] Some testify that they forfeited childhood by becoming 'parent's of their fathers who came home from prisons broken and violent.[27] Other children returned from apartheid prison angry, drug addicts or joining gangs for community and self-protection. After the end of apartheid, they confess being unable to have relationships (being dead inside), they face unemployment, homelessness and abandonment.[28] Yet, for a few something about the hearings resonated and they are able to light the flame within, to be capable of living fully again.[29] Girls, as well as women before the TRC, tended to relate stories about their families and had to be prompted to relate their own tortures. A female psychologist and head of the trauma centre in Cape Town (Cowley House), Nomfundo Walaza, notes this occurred because "We live in a patriarchal world where men are the heroes."[30]

TRC commissioners note that redemption was achieved in individual cases through truth telling, especially by Black policemen caught up in the repression and torture of youth, and re-integrating them back into the community. Commissioner Glenda Wildschut says "No court case will ever achieve that, because court cases are about retributive justice. This on the other hand, was about healing and bringing a person back to live among his people."[31]

However there are other groups such as the Khulumani support group which has pressed on since the end of the government's reparations programme to individual survivors (in 2002) to not just settle at the *individual* level but to bring about community

revival and economic uplift through broader socio-economic rehabilitation programs and business partnerships. They further facilitate ex-prisoners' return and reintegration into their communities.

Some Examples of Alternative Justice Models in South Africa

In what ways do these cases mirror traditional African peace practices? Is the spirit of *ubuntu* alive in post apartheid South Africa? The institution of the Tswana traditional *kgotla* is a) a localized court run by a council of elders (Wilson 2000) which metes out sanctions; or b) focuses group mediation and conflict resolution, such as the Xhosa *inkundla/lekgotla* courts.[32] The people's courts have undergone changes in the 1980s when young political activists became involved in revolutionary people's courts, as the South African police force did not investigate violence in the townships. In fact, prior to 1992, the police force had no training or experience in investigating crimes or basic community policing techniques, as they were only concerned with enforcing pass laws under apartheid.[33] However, not all community courts are imbued with a spirit of forgiveness; some verdicts couple restitution with corporal punishment.[34]   Harris notes that some of them have been called vigilante courts, as punishments are carried out by community actors, based on feelings of revenge.[35] Many women's rights activists have rejected the people's courts. They critique the severity of the punishments, especially where gender-based judgments show bias in favor of men. Men, for example, have not been prosecuted for adultery whereas married women prosecuted for the offense have received severe beatings in the Boipatong *kgotla*, under the authority of older male counselors. Reportedly, a woman who was turned in by her own mother for child neglect was sentenced to 50 lashes. She spent two weeks in the

hospital in recovery from severe wounds to her body. However, some women who received beatings reported their preference of the kgotla practice to imprisonment.[36]

On the other hand, there are other informal (non-state) mediation circles, which challenge the gerontocratic *kgotla*, including the ANC youth sponsored courts and the Community Policing Forum. The Community Peace Project has some 400 groups all over South Africa[37] and it is a model that thrives not only in small towns or rural areas but also in cities. Most of these projects, which are run by laypeople, especially women, exist in cooperation with state institutions, such as the criminal justice system, and they appear to mediate "soft" offenses only, such as gossip and payment disputes, but not theft, rape or murder. Yet, they have proven to be highly successful amidst all involved actors because they are not adversarial as the formal (colonial) court system. Those who reject western, expert-driven crisis intervention models, may support a community-oriented model involving healers, spiritual guides, ancestors, family members, teachers. Such peacemaking circles and rituals that cleanse traumatic events have been successful elsewhere, such as in Native America.[38]

Let me turn again to Native American peacemaking practices, which carry out the spirit of *ubuntu*.

Peacemaking circles have also been called healing circles, because the purpose of the circle is resolve conflict and not mete out punishment. Ideally the disputing parties apologize to each other at the end of the process.[39] All parties enter the circle voluntarily and discuss their respective grievances. These healing circles are guided by the wisdom that everybody's actions are influenced by what makes sense to the person. Therefore, "[n]o persons do anything inappropriate given their model of the world."[40] Therefore, it does

not really make sense to punish the offender, especially, considering that we are all connected to each other. This holistic realization leads the elders to point out with compassion to offending parties that their actions have negative consequences on the whole and that their social reintegration is encouraged for a successful community healing. Often it is the offender, rather than the victim, who is moved to tears by the illustration of the particular harms caused by the act. Macroscopically speaking, these peace circles have a great chance to minimize offenses (both violent and non-violent), and importantly, markedly reduce recidivism in a community. Peacemakers from Africa to North America and elsewhere are invited to embrace the circle of courage in one of its many variations to bring an end to youth violence and violence against youth.

There are also prison programs that have had successes in turning young lives around. *Khulisa* (Zulu: "let the child grow") teaches young prisoners life skills, such as conflict resolution through therapy, musical, visual arts education, and job training by foregrounding a philosophy of *ubuntu* and self-empowerment. Recidivism is low among these young men who discover their talents in writing, drama and storytelling to restore self-respect and a sense of responsibility. It combines the recovery of a sense of pride of one's heritage (*usiko*) with a self-reflective creative writing aspect (self-discovery); these are values reflected in the "circle of courage." This life skills program was developed in Leewkop prison and many of the young men released continue the path of being "change catalysts."[41]

Finally, it is noteworthy to mention activist-minded community organizations who have a broader social justice agenda and who have engaged in civil disobedience strategies since the late 1990s. Chatsworth community in the Durban area transformed

itself with the help of former political prisoner Fatima Meer into a community which has challenged grinding poverty, kids' prostitution to support their parents' income, tenants' evictions and electricity and water cut-offs from the privatized energy companies. They have trained a subterranean workforce, young men who become "struggle electricians" who are trained to reconnect those whose houses were cut off due to non-payments of fees. Their "fighting" slogan has become "we are the poors"—which was born out of a confrontation with a ANC government official who castigated Indians for resisting evictions and demanding better houses—an elderly lady screamed back at the official: "We are not Indians, we are the poors."[42] The landless, the tenants, the unemployed, all are mobilizing for a greener, brighter South Africa, where the government is for the people and by the people, for those who had been dispossessed, removed from their ancestral homes to make room for whites, enslaved and otherwise degraded by pass laws, etc. Ten years after the end of apartheid, structural adjustment and privatization (even of 2 prisons), the AIDS epidemic, have all contributed to sharpen the violence of poverty, so that the people have no choice left but to organize themselves—apart from government, which is for perceived of catering to big business. In Chatsworth, a youth movement was created to address the kids' criminalized status and lack of jobs. The desperation is stark as the following example shows: a 13 year old boy was caught stealing a toothbrush from the supermarket. Security brutalized him by stripping the boy and beating him, and finally turning him over to the police, where his mother had to bail him out on R300. Asked why he stole the toothbrush, he admitted that the girls at school made fun of him because of bad breath. His father abandoned the family long ago and his mother was only sporadically able to work due to a debilitating psychiatric condition.[43] Since he was older than 7 years,

his mother was not given a Child Support Grant. Fortunately for him, the state decided to dismiss the case acknowledging the family's dire poverty. (However, nobody brought charges of "police" brutality!) Activist writer and journalist Desai reminisces in court where poor people's access to water are debated: "I wondered whether the African Renaissance and the idea of *ubuntu*—the much-touted African idea of caring for the community—held any water in this court."[44] At stake was the government's argument that poor people in general are undisciplined and squander their water and the defendant had the audacity to share her free water with neighbors who had none.

Finally, even Desmond Tutu cautions us about the idealist tenor of the TRC. The commission recommended a one-time wealth tax on corporate and private income or the private sector/financial market's one-time donation for Black economic development. Tutu warns that if there is no real material transformation for apartheid's victims, "we might just as well kiss reconciliation goodbye. It just won't happen without some reparation."[45] In 1994 Mandela's South Africa has shown the world that a path of compassion is possible, now is the time to implement it by rethinking structural adjustment policies, rethinking criminal justice and contemplating redistribution of wealth—and land. If those material conditions were put in place, it would be easy for the youth of South Africa to embrace *ubuntu*—after all, this is what they fought for when demanding the end of apartheid and white minority rule.

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